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# MAYOR HYLAN

OF NEW YORK



AN  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
*of*  
JOHN FRANCIS HYLAN

MAYOR OF  
NEW YORK

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AUTHORIZED EDITION

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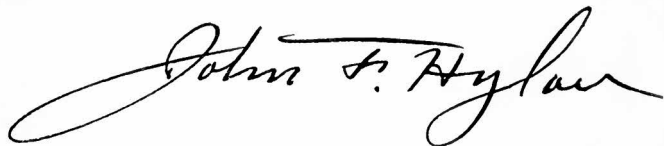
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*An Appreciation*

## AN APPRECIATION

*I wish to acknowledge with due appreciation the services rendered me by Mr. George F. Dobson, Jr., who has been kind enough to bear with me while I have in snatches of time tried to recall some of the outstanding things in my life that they may be published in the form of an Autobiography, and I may say that I shall be compensated if any one shall be brought to see my life in its true light as I have sincerely tried to live it.*

A large, elegant handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John F. Hylan". The signature is written in dark ink and features a prominent, sweeping flourish at the beginning and end.

Mayor of New York.

## *Forword*

## FOREWORD

The story of the life of John Francis Hyman, and the many interesting facts of his career, were obtained by the writer after many fruitless efforts, and then only after complete confidence had been established that no political aim or motive was the moving consideration, but that an interested public had formed an inquiring mind concerning the Mayor who had so wrought as to occupy an unique position in the thought and imagination of millions of people, and therefore the story may be said to be more than anything else the result of a popular demand.

The voice of the great masses is always a command. They wish to know the private life and history of their servants.

There are so many interesting phases to Mayor Hyman's life that it was difficult for me, as a news representative of the *New York Globe*, in which first appeared these articles, and which were received with such wide interest, to frame any kind of an account of his life that would quite equal a simple story in his own words, and so the Mayor consented to recite in the form of an Autobiography the more salient points in his career, and since the public has responded with such universal praise and approval of the publication of the biography, we are pleased, with the Mayor's consent, to publish his life in permanent form.

The recital is therefore in no sense a political vehicle nor a bid for votes, as any unprejudiced mind will discover in reading the simple story of a man accustomed to the simple things of life, a lover of his home and an esteemed neighbor.

Surely a man who has been re-elected Mayor of New York City for four years more of unbroken service by an unprecedented plurality of almost 420,000 with a vote of 750,247 need not ask nor apologize for a purview that would reveal a life so absorbingly interesting.

His story, told in such graphic manner, shows the possibilities of the American youth of any station. Born of poor parents, he was denied sufficient education, but he persevered and his tenacity has placed him at the head of the greatest city in the world. Even his political enemies—and he has no others—have never dared to impugn his honesty or sincerity.

An idea of what is involved in his task in the New York City Hall can be gleaned from the following facts.

## NEW YORK CITY:

Annually has a turn-over of about \$2,000,000,000 in its finances.

Has a budget of \$350,000,000.

Employs more than 80,000 persons.

Has about 12,000 policemen, 6,000 firemen and 6,500 street cleaners.

Has more than 1,600 miles of paved streets in its three boroughs.

Had a death rate, in 1921, of 11.17 per thousand, the lowest in its history and the lowest of any large city in the world.

Has in the public schools alone 900,000 students.

Handles approximately 250,000,000 tons of freight in its harbors every year.

It is unquestionably the greatest business enterprise in the world today.

GEO. F. DOBSON, JR.

## INTRODUCTION

Men are seriously discussing from the platform and the forum whether democracy has failed or is simply imperiled in this country.

Some of the most thoughtful publicists, as well as many who could possibly be dignified by the title of statesmen, do not pause to openly declare, supported by many disquieting facts (although their logic does not appeal to any considerable number), purporting to substantiate the claim that democracy has actually failed in this country.

One does not however have to accept the postulate of a Jeremiah or be moved by the disconsolate cry of a confirmed pessimist, to discover for himself an undercurrent of a political thought not altogether reassuring to the protagonists of free democratic government.

Without going into any of the basic reasons for any failure that may rightfully be or not charged to our free government there is a jimson weed growth on the surface of an otherwise beautiful political landscape that should at least have the attention of the gardener.

Our freedom has been taken for license and the license has grown into a species of political expediency.

One of the outward manifestations of this political wart is its prominence on the face of almost every local, state and national contest of contending factions, where principles are supposed to govern politics and policies, but where in fact political expediency assumes the role of determining the course of action. In the last analysis it resolves itself into a contest as to whose ox is to be gored.

There is a deep seated conviction among the people that our politicians are not salient but expedient in their thought and that the virus of it has reached the fountainhead. An United States Senator said recently that if the question were put squarely up to the people they would abolish the United States Senate.

A sorrowful aspect of this phase of political tendency is the false estimate placed upon principle and character in the equation of values. A public servant should be a man of deep conviction as to what is right, and have the character to back it up. This is fundamental in any free government. But when a public servant

is chosen with any other idea in mind the disposition is to reduce him to an automaton and subject him to the whim and caprice of every form of discontent, or privilege, and have it understood that the price of **his** resistance is castigation and the discard.

It is not surprising therefore that many of our very best citizens positively refuse to assume the duties of citizenship insofar as public office is concerned. They are not willing that their good names shall be cartooned and lampooned; that their wives and children shall look into their faces and wonder if it is possible that an irresponsible mountebank can know more of the virtues of a father than the wife and child around the hearthstone; that a snickering, sniveling snarl shall be lifted against them by a jaundiced eyed and nagging public, who have been taught through the ribald and rasping satire of some smart chap, whose urge is the dignified but nonetheless virulent proscription of editors, which for lack of a better term is best described as editorial billingsgate, emanating from sources from which the public has a right to expect the best but gets the worst, that one of the vested rights of the press is to hold up in contempt any public official that may not square to its standard of measurement. So the heartless paragrapher and the phrase maker, who too frequently mistake sauce for sense and taunt for talent proceed with their bombardment of words and the people, more or less as a jest, in answer throw up an embankment and with pop guns shoot votes at them.

It is with no disrespect for the great purveyors of news and thunderers of editorial philippics to ask (and it is not an impertinent bolshevistic quiz but what the average subway hound hurls about with reckless abandon), whether the modern newspaper is losing its ancient leadership, especially in times when great issues come to head and where the information of the public is obtained, not so much from a "carefully culled column," as from well settled convictions as to the real facts in the case?

Is it possible for a great journal to lose community perspective and circulate to its own hurt and embarrassment?

There are many things, however, that could enter into this apparent lack of power. The editor might peradventure be off on a journey a-yachting, or he might be a-golping!

Or it may be the "seasonal fag," so characteristic of individuals at times, when sweet repose in the lap of self complacency, folds its hands and "drifts gently down the tides of sleep," while without is the bustle of activity and in the tree tops is heard the rustle

of the leaves and the watchman in the tower with insistence cries, "swift, swift, ye dragons of the night," and there is perceptible movement among all except those on whom "the timely dews of sleep" have fallen while "idly busy rolls their world away"; in any event there is an astonishing disparity between the polished sentences of the average newspaper and the acts of the ordinary citizen, saying nothing as to who is right. They may have been together and seen each other face to face in former years, but not now.

It may be that the fathers have eaten sour grapes; anyhow the children's teeth are set on edge.

One of the most outstanding personal triumphs of a man over just that condition of affairs was the recent re-election of John F. Hylan as Mayor of New York by an unprecedented plurality of almost four hundred and twenty thousand votes in a total of seven hundred and fifty thousand, and as the volume of his acclaim arose the "mocking winds were piping loud" and shot holes through the sails of every floating craft aft the stern of a whole battery of newspapers that espoused his defeat.

To sum it all up Mayor Hylan broke all precedents in New York politics, not because he was a politician, for he is no such thing, not because he had an unbreakable machine, for he does not know how to work that kind of a machine but because he stood definitely for certain things, and he stood there with an unyielding tenacity and a dauntless courage, and behind it all was an unimpeachable character, a man of honesty and integrity, a neighbor and a friend, and a man whose private and family life were beyond reproach.

Therefore the Autobiography of Mayor Hylan is of more than usual interest as a source of intimate knowledge of this remarkable man and an inspiration of the youth of the land, and a conclusive refutation to the claim that democracy has or will fail so long as a farmer boy, a common railroad labor hand, a driver of spikes in a construction gang, a fireman on a train, can rise through sheer merit to the position of being the governing head of the greatest city in the world, and the most talked of man in the United States, except the President himself.

WILLIAM T. AMIS.



*Mother's Advice in Starting Out*

## CHAPTER I

### MOTHER'S ADVICE IN STARTING OUT

If I were asked to suggest a motto for any man or woman just starting out in life, I unhesitatingly would repeat the words of my mother at the time I left our farm in the Catskill Mountains to make my way in the city. These words are indelibly imprinted in my memory. They were:

"Be honest, be truthful, be upright, and do by others as you would have them do unto you."

Any message to the youth might be much longer, but those words are sufficient. One might add that a boy, for instance, should never be afraid of hard work. It never has killed a boy. My experience in life has firmly convinced me that work is always more beneficial than harmful. Neither does it pay to be selfish or avaricious. A boy should never decline to perform a task which will make things easier for another. In order to succeed one cannot be selfish. If you make rosy the path for another, your own path, beyond any doubt, will be bright.

The lesson involved in this message applies equally to rich and poor, to the city lad as well as to the farmer's son. Principle is not a matter of geography or of surroundings.

I was born on a little farm in Hunter, Greene County, in the Catskill Mountains, on April 20, 1868, and was christened John Francis Hylan. It sounds, perhaps, a trifle more romantic to city folk than it does to such as were bred in the Catskills, when I recall that I romped a section only eight miles away from the legendary home of Rip Van Winkle. We never took seriously that legend, although I have made many trips to the spot from our farm.

We used to go there quite frequently on a Sunday, looking on the trip more as a picnic or outing than a visit to some famous spot. Frankly, we were more intent on getting the luscious blueberries which grew and still grow on the mountainside. Naturally, I cannot conceive of any berries which compared with those blueberries. Of course we knew the story of Rip Van Winkle, but I am afraid the berries were more of an attraction than the legend.

I was the oldest of three boys, but had two older sisters; they are all dead now, as are my father and mother. The last one to pass away was Mary, a sister who was run down and killed by an auto-

mobile in Brooklyn, July 10, 1911. A brother, who also had come to Brooklyn, died about twenty years ago from typhoid. Today I am without any close blood relative, and quite naturally it is a source of regret that my parents, brothers and sisters all passed away before I became Mayor of the greatest city of the world. I have several cousins living and an uncle in Long Beach, California.

It has often been said that I was of pure Irish stock, but that is not quite correct. My mother was what is known as an up-state Yankee, named Jones. Her father was a Welshman and her mother's grandfather a Frenchman, named Jacob Gadron. The latter came to this country with Lafayette, and fought in 1777 with him in the Revolutionary War. He was buried in Westchester County.

My mother has been dead for more than thirty years, but I still remember her as a wonderful woman, a good wife, and a loving mother. She meant a great deal to me, while she was here and later in life.

My father came here at the age of seven, from the County of Cavan, Ulster, Ireland. I still recall his vivid description of the trip to this country in a sailing vessel, which took more than a month to cross the Atlantic. He was a veteran in the Civil War, a corporal in the 120th New York Infantry, which later became the Eightieth, New York.

My parents had a farm in Hunter, in the Catskills, when that section was not what it is today, when it was wild and not so popular a playground for vacationists. There were many farms thereabouts and few hotels. Today it is a different story. That section of the Catskills is built up, and particularly in the summer is thriving and bustling with holiday seekers.

We had about sixty acres in our farm, but also a mortgage of \$1,500, a constant source of worry to everyone in our household.

Being the oldest boy, I had to pitch in and do a great deal of the farm work. These duties included the chores morning and night, which were not considered a part of the day's work with farmers in those days. It was a case of being called at 5 o'clock every morning, then milking the cows, attending to the chores, and performing like tasks until 7 o'clock, when the breakfast bell would ring. After that meal we began the day's real work, and worked steadily, particularly in the haying time, until noon, when lunch offered a respite.

It was digging or hoeing potatoes, cradling grain, mowing hay by hand, building the stone wall around the farm, milking the cows, and work of that type. There was no time for rest. I can even remember my father calling us smilingly during the lunch hour, after we had been perhaps ten or fifteen minutes at the table:

"Come on, boys," he would say, "let's unload that hay during lunch hour or while we are resting."

We had no patented farm implements, none of the new-fangled machinery, and it was all handwork and muscle. When it was time for bed we were always ready for sleep. That usually was around 9 o'clock, although much depended on when darkness set in. Until the sun set, irrespective of the clock, we kept at it.

In that way little thought was given to school or education when the weather would permit the tilling of the farm. The work of the farm was the first essential, and school was a secondary consideration, particularly in the season for planting and harvesting. If the elder children could be spared from the farm for the day, we could go to school, but otherwise school could get along without us, as planting and harvesting must be attended to when the weather would permit.

As a result of that situation I was unable to attain as good an education as I desired. Because I was the oldest boy the necessities of the farm quite naturally fell heaviest on my shoulders. The custom of farmer boys was to go barefooted most of the time. In fact, we never had more than one pair of boots or shoes in any one year. And those we wore in the winter only. It was up to us to make that pair last through the rigors of the winter months, for we never had a second pair in the same year.

Our school averaged thirty boys and girls from the surrounding countryside. I can remember particularly one teacher. Her name was Bella Ford. She taught us reading, writing and arithmetic. Since I was sometimes mischievous, I had, occasionally, to make it a practice to get back into her good graces. Sometimes it meant shovelling off the snow on the walk from the road to the school-house, sweep out the classroom, and quite frequently build the fire.

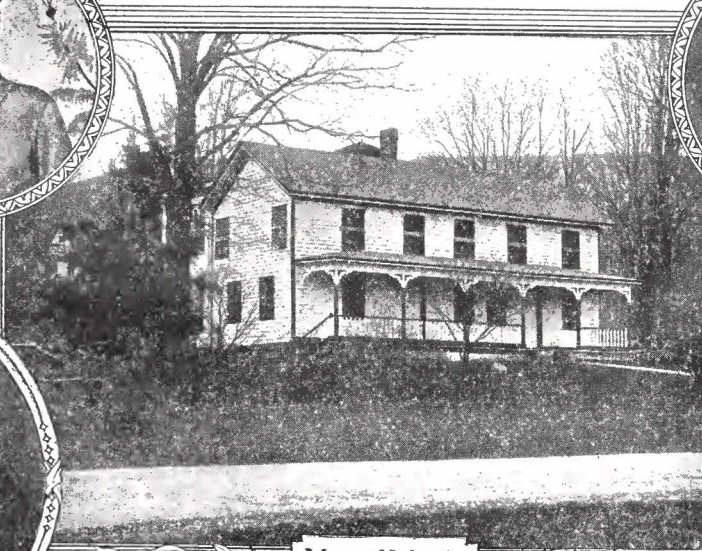
Grammar was taught in our school, and also some history, but there was only one family, named McGinness, which could afford the grammar books, and the three girls of that family were the only ones who were taught grammar. However, I used to smuggle in once in a while by the fireplace when the grammar recitations were on, having borrowed that single grammar book so as to follow



Mayor Hylan's  
Father



Mayor Hylan  
at the time of  
his Marriage



Mayor Hylan's  
Birthplace



Mayor Hylan's  
Mother



The Mayor at  
the Age of Four



the lesson. And the same thing happened in regard to history, in which I was always interested.

We had about five months' schooling each year, perhaps four or five hours each day.

All that time we had that mortgage over us and as I reached my teens I went out and earned a little side money each spring by working on George Coykendall's railroad, which ran through the mountains and was part of the Stony Clove and Catskill railroad system. The winter storms always played havoc with the railroad tracks, and each spring there had to be considerable mending done to the roadbed. For that work I used to get \$1.10 a day.

It meant removing the dirt from the side of the roadbed and tamping under the railroad ties to make firm the roadbed from winter ravages. The road later became part of the Ulster and Delaware system. That was my first experience with railroads.

When I reached the age of nineteen and winter was on us, with that mortgage interest nearly due again, I became restless and told my folks I thought I could help more successfully by trying my luck in the city. They tried to dissuade me, but I insisted on the experiment.

I had saved \$2.50 through my work on the railroad and I went to a neighbor to borrow a dollar to add to my fortune. It was then that my mother put her arms around me and gave me the advice I have quoted. I have never forgotten her words. At the risk of being accused of egotism, I want to say her words have always been with me. I have faithfully followed the tenets of her farewell message to me.

I had a Sunday suit, a working suit, two shirts, summer underwear, a pair of shoes, a pair of overalls, a toothbrush, a little comb in my pocket, and that was all that constituted my outfit to impress the city folks. One of my brothers was at the time helplessly ill, and another brother was too young to earn his living. With the \$3.50 I started out, riding by stage to Catskill Village, and thence by boat to New York City. That trip cost me all told \$2, so I landed in New York City with \$1.50. In my inside pocket I had a letter of introduction to some Brooklyn man, given to me by one of our neighbors. I never used the letter, as it turned out.

When I reached New York City, of course I was amazed, but I did not lose heart. I went over the Brooklyn Bridge to Brooklyn, and the first thing I saw of interest was some construction work on the elevated system. I climbed up the structure and applied to the

foreman for a job. Of course I explained to him that I had worked on the Catskill railroad, and he immediately ordered me to report to work the next morning. Not having seen an elevated railroad before in my life, I was naturally a trifle apprehensive about working up that high, but the necessities of the occasion stilled my fears.

The next morning I was laying rails, more intent on keeping my balance and not falling to the street from the high structure than on my work. In driving a spike the second day I had my job I hit one of my fingers a hard smash, almost breaking it, but did not dare tell the foreman for fear I should be dismissed. I still carry a scar from that blow. In spite of the pain, I kept at my task.

From that work I graduated into a stoker on the road, which was known as the Brooklyn Union Elevated Railroad. I had finished with the construction work and had applied for the stoker's place to a Colonel Martin, general manager of the road. He had, in his outer office, a fellow named John Davis. Day after day I went to this Davis and pleaded to get into the inner sanctuary of Colonel Martin, but always was politely put off.

Each day, however, I went away smiling, and finally Davis was impressed with my persistence and my smile, and he eventually ushered me into Colonel Martin's room. The next day I started work as a stoker, receiving \$1.60, happy in the thought that this job might lead to one higher up. The engineers in those days were getting \$3.50 a day, and that, of course, to me was a fortune.

For two years I worked as a stoker and what was known as an engine hostler, always keeping friendly with John Davis. The result was he helped me get my promotion as an engineer when I had passed the test, and so finally landed on the right side of the engine cab. I think that was one of the happiest moments of my life.

John Davis remained a friend until his death only a short time ago. But he lived to see me elected Mayor of New York City, and he was proud of it. I remained on the elevated road, all told, nine years. As an engineer, I had a run starting at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. It was a thirteen-hour run, except on Saturdays, when it was twelve, and on Sundays, when it was eleven hours.

*School and Romance*





JOHN H. McCOOEY

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOOL AND ROMANCE

All this time I had managed to save enough to send to my parents that \$75 interest money every six months and perhaps some folks will realize what that meant to them. When my nine years with the elevated road were concluded I had also saved enough to pay off that mortgage of \$1,500. Only those who are mortgage-ridden can appreciate what that meant.

It was in connection with the interest payments that I first laid eyes on John H. McCooey, now Democratic leader of Brooklyn. In those days McCooey was in charge of Station S of the post-office, located at Myrtle and Sumner avenue. When I had saved the first \$75 I went to that postoffice totally ignorant of how to proceed with my money. There was a jovial, kindly fellow in the branch office, and I pleaded with him for help. He made out the draft for me and thus I sent the money.

Some months later I had occasion to go to the general postoffice on Washington street in Brooklyn to cash a small money order, and I was asked to identify myself. Hopelessly I looked around for some means of identification, when I espied that jovial, kindly face which I had first noticed in Station S. He immediately identified me, and I cashed my order. That man had become assistant postmaster of Brooklyn, and he quickly O. K.'d my money order for me. I then learned he was John H. McCooey, and we have been friends ever since that time.

Our farm today is in other hands. It has been sold, except for a small corner where we have built a cottage. Often I go back there, for I love to roam in the old section, despite its changes from my boyhood days. Other people own the sixty acres, except for that little corner plot, but it is still dear to me. Whenever opportunity offers I take a trip up to Hunter, and it is always a respite.

Reverting to my boyhood days and the time of my youthful pranks, I can remember that I was about as mischievous as the next boy. Well do I recollect that when I was whipped in school for some prank it followed like night and day that my father would repeat the punishment as soon as I went home. That was quite a customary procedure in our section. The school punishment was only the first part and the home treatment was always more severe.

I can remember two or three good thrashings my father gave me, but I well deserved them. At school my sweeping or the building of fires, as penance, usually replaced me in the good graces of Miss Bella Ford.

I can remember also, as if it occurred only a few weeks ago, one of the serious scrapes I fell into. We had a teacher named Hoff, and at the time he was not over popular with our class. One day I made a jumping-jack and, reaching the school early, proceeded to so hang it that it looked almost like a halo over the teacher's desk. Then I ran a string along the panel, the end of which reached my desk.

When everything was going along quietly in the class I pulled the string, and of course every one began to giggle and titter. Finally the teacher "caught on," and he immediately sought to discover the miscreant. I was the only serious one in the room, and probably too serious. I was blamed for the affront to the teacher, and was rewarded with a severe chastisement. Of course, the news was conveyed to my home, and that night there was a duplication by father's stern arm.

Naturally, I had my romance. On the next farm to us was Peter O'Hara, and he had a daughter, Marian. We were sweethearts, even before I came to the city, and I knew what girl I wanted to marry. When I landed that job of stoker with the Brooklyn Union Elevated Road I decided the time had come, and went back to Hunter to claim my sweetheart. I was getting \$15 a week, no great money, it is true, but it was enough in those days, and we were married by Father Hugh O'Neill. It was he from whom I had made my first communion. We established ourselves in a little flat in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, and we have stayed ever since in that section. Now, of course, I own my own house there.

Youthful marriages are often decried. I believe in them. I believe every young man and woman should marry, and I have done as much as I could in furtherance of my theory. There is a pleasure in starting young people off right in this world. And yet, peculiar as it may seem, I never have performed a marriage ceremony. I have always declined to do it when I was on the bench, and I have declined to do it as Mayor.

Some may ask why this declination, when I so heartily believe in the marriage of young persons. The reason is that to me marriage is sacred. I believe it should be performed only by the cler-

gymen of the different denominations. It is a holy ceremony to me, and I believe only holy men should officiate. That duty is for men of the cloth, and they alone, generally speaking, can give to it the touch of reverence which is so essential.

Brooklyn had been our haven at the start, and it remains my home. I first had reached it when it was still a city, the year before the big blizzard of 1888. It was on the day of the blizzard that I reported for my first day's work as a fireman at the engine house of the elevated system in East New York. Naturally my promotion of that day is still fresh in my mind.

However, when I became an engineer, had been married, and I had settled down in our home, I confess I was more or less ambitionless. My mind was pretty well filled with my job and with our domestic affairs. I was getting about \$100 a month and probably had, quite unconsciously resigned myself to the prospect of spending the rest of my life running an engine on the elevated railroad. But about this time my younger brother, who was then preparing for the law, and to work himself into a substantial position, died. It was to him that the family had looked for distinction and fame.

That death changed my perspective. I conceived the idea that perhaps I could carry our name to the place whither my brother had been headed. I broached the subject, with some trepidation, to my wife. Her advice, on our first big problem, was sound — just as sound as it has always been since then. She decided I ought to take a chance and try to become a lawyer.

It should be remembered that my country school days had not fitted me to take even the preliminary examination for legal study. The regents' examination was ahead of me before I could start studying law. But finally we decided I should take up the academic course in the Long Island Business College, which was considered a good institution.

I had a shift on the locomotive starting at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and had to do some arranging at the college to make my classes. Furthermore, I did not have much time to sleep, since it was 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning before I left my engine. It was a case of arising each day at 8 o'clock, and Mrs. Hylan used to call me at 7:30 and give me one-half hour of extra winks. That half-hour extra seemed to stimulate me for the day. I had a fine constitution, did not know what it meant to be sick, and discovered then that hard work is a splendid trainer and a good



builder. I still believe in it and follow the theory even at the City Hall.

In the Long Island College was a professor, Andrew Gerndt. He had taken a liking to me, and had offered to help me along in my studies. Knowing my ambition and realizing the difficulties entailed in an afternoon shift on the railroad, the professor, in a kindly spirit, gave up his lunch hour many a day in order to assist me. I have never forgotten that kind service. Professor Gerndt to-day is suffering from failing eyesight, so he cannot follow his profession. He is an elderly man, but I have been able since becoming mayor to repay his interest in me. The professor to-day holds a position in the Department of Water Supply, Gas, and Electricity.

Likewise my wife was an able assistant. She actually prepared my lessons herself and would help to write out problems, answers, and lessons for me, to study on my engine.

When I had passed the regents, Mrs. Hylan followed the same formula while I studied at the law school. I entered the New York Law School, and at the same time took a clerkship in the law office of James T. Olwell, a Long Island City attorney. Still driving my engine, I put in the requisite time at the law school and also at the law office. In that manner I covered, in about two and a half years, the necessary period.

I can well remember how I tried to take my law examination in Brooklyn, but I had not put in quite the necessary law office work, being about ten days short, for the state examination, and I had to wait until the fall, when the next test was held in Syracuse. I had joined the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers—in which I still hold my card—and through this membership I managed to get up to Syracuse without spending any money. I rode in the cab of the locomotive to get there.

I may as well confess right here that I was fired from that job as engineer, and it was the only time in my life that I ever was separated from any job. It was a short time before I was to take my bar examinations in Syracuse, and I was busily studying law.

I was in my engine one night when my train reached what is known as the Navy Street curve. At that spot there is a switch tower and in it was Superintendent Barton, who was a very old man. He stepped out of the switch tower and was about to cross

the tracks as my train reached the tower, and was nearly run down. It was his own fault, as a matter of fact, and not mine.

I had slowed down the train for the curve, as the rules provided, but Superintendent Barton, angered by his narrow escape, called me to his office and I was discharged. It was the first time in all of the nine years on the road that a charge of any kind was made against me.

*Law and Politics*

## CHAPTER III

### LAW AND POLITICS

Of course I was happy when I passed my examination for the bar after a little more than two and a half years' study in law school, which was pretty good for a country boy who had missed even a rudimentary school training. But there remained ahead the big task, that of establishing a law business. I had, by this time, paid off the mortgage on the farm, so that I could look to the future with less apprehension. I studied law under competent men, one of whom included Woodrow Wilson, who lectured on constitutional law at the New York Law School. Receiving my diploma in October, 1897, I started back to Brooklyn, only to find that it takes money to open a law office and to hang out a shingle.

There was only one thing to do—place a mortgage on the farm again, and this I did, for \$500. Then taking desk room in a real estate office at Gates avenue and Broadway, I purchased from the realty man a second-hand desk. I remember very well how I paid him \$8 for that desk, and he immediately went out and bought himself a new one. But that real estate gentleman wanted to fly too high, and too quickly, and eventually I took over the whole office. At the start I had paid him \$5 a month for my desk room.

The first month my law practice brought me just \$24. The next month I made \$26, then I made \$48, and the fourth month I netted \$80. I have the records to this day, and often look them over, although I can recall each event without recourse to any data. In a short time I was getting so busy that I was able to hire another lawyer at \$25 a week. I had a stenographer at \$10 a week, and a clerk at \$12. But I was beginning to build up a good litigation business of a civil nature. I had very little work in police courts, and never cared for that branch of the law.

Of course, I worked hard, and found it paid best to make certain of victory in the lower courts every time. I won about seven out of ten cases in the lower courts, and in that way always forced my opponent to shoulder the expense of appeals to the higher courts. Naturally every one tries to win his cases, but I believe my average of lower court triumphs was beyond the usual.



My first partner, and also my only partner, in law was Harry C. Underhill, author of "Underhill on Civil and Criminal Evidence." He did the office work while I did the trial work.

Starting law practice in 1897, I kept at it for nine years, just as I had been in the Brooklyn Union Elevated Railroad Company for nine years. My start in the judiciary, dating from 1906, was due to a discovery I made in the law affecting police magistrates in Brooklyn.

There had been eight magistrates in Brooklyn, appointed by the mayor under the law. A legislative act was passed in Albany making Brooklyn magistrates elective instead of appointive and providing for ten instead of eight. Thereupon the eight sitting magistrates in Brooklyn having been appointed for certain periods, went to court and demanded that the ten subsequently elected magistrates be thrown out. The eight won their case and the ten were beaten. But there still remained in the law the provision for ten and not eight magistrates in Brooklyn. I discovered this fact, and immediately mandamused the then Mayor McClellan to fill the two vacant places.

Mayor McClellan under the court order named Alexander Geismar and myself to the two places. That is how I started my career on the bench. At that time it so happened that there were assigned to Brooklyn, or Kings County, under the law, only two county judges. A great deal of work had to be done in their courts, since Brooklyn was growing very rapidly, so I prepared a proposed constitutional amendment and it was presented to the legislature, providing for two additional county judges. The work had become so heavy that up-state judges were being sent to Brooklyn to help out at \$20 a day extra.

Governor Glynn, after the constitutional amendment became effective, appointed Robert Roy and myself to the two places. But the politicians were not for us, and there started a battle to get us out. Judge Jaycox, sitting in the lower court, decided against us, and the Appellate Division, upholding Judge Jaycox, disrobed Roy and myself. We were not satisfied, however, and took the case to the Court of Appeals. We had been deprived of our office by an opinion written by Luke D. Stapleton and Almet F. Jenks in the Appellate Division. In the Court of Appeals there was a different story.

In a unanimous decision we were declared entitled to our places on the county bench, and we again took up our judicial work. One of those who concurred in that verdict was Emery A. Chase of Catskill, a worthy judge of the highest court in the state, a man who had been, at one time, a teacher in our little school in Greene County.

We served two years and were then renominated for the same places. To the surprise of many politicians, the people in Brooklyn gave me more than 37,000 plurality over my opponent.

Living in the Ninth Senatorial District, I had been imbued, before reaching this stage of my career, with an ambition to go to the state Senate. I had been quite busy in my district, as well as in the adjoining one, and belonged to the Democratic organization, Board of Trade, Business Men's, and Civic clubs in the Bushwick and Eastern District sections of Brooklyn.

I may add here that I had paid off that \$500 mortgage on the farm at this time, and had no other debts.

When I broached the subject of my senatorial ambition to the late Senator Patrick H. McCarren, the leader of Brooklyn—and a powerful, resourceful leader he was—he shook his head negatively. He declared he already had promised the nomination to Connie Hasenflug, one of his trusted captains. He had given his word of honor to Hasenflug, declared Senator McCarren, and he emphasized that he never had broken his word.

Arguing with the senator that I held, safely in my hand, thirty-eight votes of the fifty-two necessary for the nomination, I convinced him of my strength. He saw I was right and then, frankly stating his position, pleaded with me to withdraw, so that he could not be accused of having broken faith with a friend and could not be charged with having broken his first promise.

Now, I knew that trait in Senator McCarren, of being a man of his word, and I did not relish the idea of being the instrument of a broken promise. When Senator McCarren frankly conceded that I held the whip hand, I told him I would withdraw in favor of Hasenflug. The senator was not the kind to forget, and he didn't. He offered me immediately a nomination to congress, but I did not then care for such a place, and declined to take it. Later, when the mandamus proceedings were instituted with Mayor McClellan to appoint two magistrates, Senator Mc-

Carren was one of my staunchest supporters. He repaid the sacrifice I had made.

It does not always pay, I have found, to grab everything that is in your grasp. There are times when a man will get something far better than he has in his grip by being liberal with the other fellow. Certainly, such was the case with my dealings with Senator McCarren. I had a high personal regard for him, despite the enemies he made.

I remained in the County Court of Brooklyn until I became the mayor of New York City, Jan. 1, 1918.

My ambition while on the bench was to go to the Supreme Court. Until then I never had dreamt of the mayoralty. Like most judges, I naturally looked to the higher court, and in my case it was the Supreme Court.

When I was elected to the county bench by that 37,000 plurality, and some of the big political leaders began to take notice, I realized, once in a while, that I might be figuring in the next mayoralty election. In no sense was I seeking such a nomination, but I could see it was a possibility on the political horizon. And so it turned out.

What happened subsequently is almost too well known to repeat. The people gave me the first time I ran 148,000 plurality, with three other candidates in the field, and elected me overwhelmingly the second time by 420,000.

The first time I was designated for mayor I was in Saratoga with Mrs. Hylan and my daughter, Virginia. We were staying at the United States Hotel when a telephone message came from New York for me. On the other end of the wire was Joseph Yeska, who has since died. He was president of the Business Men's League, and telephoned me that I had been selected to head the ticket.

Immediately we packed our grips, and my wife, daughter, and I determined we should seek the quiet and seclusion of Hunter to get our bearings. So we returned to our old home town and stayed there for three days. Then we came back to New York to map out the campaign.

Mrs. Hylan said the people knew my work on the bench, and she never once doubted the outcome. Personally I confess to some little fear, because I felt that while in Brooklyn I was known, yet there were four other boroughs to be reckoned with.

I felt that if I could only show the residents of the other boroughs the sincerity of my purpose everything would be smooth sailing. Then came the attack on me from the World. To be quite frank, I regretted it deeply. One or two persons whom I knew very well and whom I actually had befriended assisted the World, and that hurt more, I think, than the malicious and vicious attack of the paper.

There was another phase of that attack which pained me. I had, almost religiously, followed the teachings of the elder Pulitzer. I had studied his principles and had been much impressed with them. I am free to say that anything I have accomplished in my public career is to a great extent due to his teachings, and I pay this homage to him and his memory because he deserves this credit. Of course, I have realized since then that any younger Pulitzer is not Joseph Pulitzer.

*The First Dollar and Friends*

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST DOLLAR AND FRIENDS

Most men like to remember how they made their first dollar. I can recollect without any trouble, how I became possessed of the first one I ever earned. I was still in school and we had a neighbor named Hiram Carl. He had, grazing on the side of the mountain, a herd of cows, and he used to get me to drive the cattle into his barn-yard to be milked, which meant a steep climb up the mountainside.

I kept track of what was coming to me by chalking up on a mammoth rock a mark for each day I drove in the cows. But when I had been working for many days for him a heavy rain came along and washed away my bookkeeping, leaving Hiram Carl and myself, neither of us very good at arithmetic, very much in the air as to our financial status. He compromised the bargain eventually by giving me a hatful of old-fashioned pennies. And when counted up that hatful of pennies constituted the first dollar I ever had earned.

When I am asked to describe what was the proudest moment of my life, most persons would expect me to refer to my mayoralty election. It is peculiar, yet true, that I probably derived more pride out of the fact that I was able to send my daughter to college than any occasion that I can think of. And to her credit be it said that she never missed a day in the four years at college. Not having had a college education myself, I realized, as I grew older, the value of it, and hence I worked hard to see that Virginia managed to get one.

There was little or no political ambition in my early life. Of course, I never dreamed of being mayor of New York City. I was always a Democrat, probably following, like so many others, in my father's footsteps. He always had voted the Democratic ticket, and he was one of the few in Greene County that did. That county, of course, had been Republican nearly all the time. I then believed, and still believe, the Democratic party stands for the rights of the people, if the party leaders adhere to the principles of that party. Sometimes, of course, the leaders have drifted from the precepts, and that has occurred usually when the leaders, or those who sought to control, tried to use the party

for personal gain. Of course, no party has yet been discovered which is infallible. The people are getting away from strict party ties, and are standing for humanity and principles, such as were enunciated by Abraham Lincoln.

I remember when a youngster of visualizing how wonderful it would be to go to congress. It was, however, a far-off vision, and not even a hope. My idea of the real hero was Daniel Boone and men of his stamp, and western pioneers were my hobby.

Youth did not afford me much chance for sports and games. Once in a great while I would manage to play baseball with the other boys, but that was on rare occasions. There never was for me such pastime as tennis or golf. Baseball and swimming were about all I could have. To this day I have retained my love for baseball, and that is the only game I really have had time to know at all. Whenever the chance affords, I attend the baseball games, and that is my real recreation.

Several of my boyhood chums came to the city after I reached Brooklyn. There is one of them in Brooklyn now. He came to the city, only to find the pace was a little hard for him, and I managed finally to get him into the Park Department.

Despite politics, I have never been a drinker nor a smoker, but that does not mean that I am for prohibition. I believe in personal freedom, but do not feel impelled to discuss Mr. Volstead. I will leave that to others.

My reading has been more of a legal and historical turn than any other. Of course, I like reading, and frequently enjoy a good book or light literature. For me there is nothing more restful than an evening at home, with a good book, after a hard day's work. I much prefer that to the theatre or other amusements. I appreciate, however, a good play occasionally, and a comedy or drama on the stage or on the screen interests me.

Youthful environment unquestionably leaves its mark, and I believe this is exemplified, quite strongly, in the friendship and habits of later days. Sometimes I am told that I should not wave to or salute this or that person because I am the mayor. During a parade, not long ago, a poorly dressed woman in the crowd yelled a greeting to me, and I turned around and waved back at her. With me at the time was a man, who said: "You should not do that, Mr. Mayor. You shouldn't pay attention to a common person like that. It isn't dignified." I replied: "How do you



know she is common? Because she is poorly clad does not mean that she is common."

By the same token I believe in sticking to friends and those in whom you have confidence. It is a duty to stand with those who do right. Take, for example, the offices in this city of the Commissioner of Accounts and Police Commissioner, both very important in the municipality. The Commissioner of Accounts investigates all departments, and hence is of great aid to the mayor in keeping his finger on what is transpiring in the various offices. There are those in many departments who are not satisfied with their salaries, and they, perhaps, are tempted to do a little business on the side. These gentlemen are checked by the Commissioner of Accounts and they are brought to an understanding. Naturally, the politician and his friends become interested immediately to help the departmental employee. When this class of politician finds he cannot use the Commissioner of Accounts and discovers he cannot cover up any misconduct on the part of some official in whom interested, the backfire is started to drive out of office the Commissioner of Accounts. Every available weapon is used, even to publicity in the newspapers, or some of them at least.

With the Police Commissioner it is much the same thing. The principle involved is identical. This commissioner has to deal more with crooks and the vicious elements, which find it hard and now impossible to make connections directly with the city administration. But they are always attempting to make indirect connections with departments dealing with the administration of the penal law, in order to permit them to safely violate the law.

Prior to my administration many large gambling places doing a thriving business were run in New York city, and run openly. Many disorderly houses flourished, as well as innumerable resorts of a questionable character. Dissolute women infested the streets of our city. People interested in these pursuits have many influential friends, and to me it is most amazing to find so many distinguished persons coming forward with aid when these people are in trouble. This type of business, in this administration, has been driven out, and I hope for good.

Naturally the gamblers and the proprietors of disorderly resorts, friends of dissolute women, have started their backfire on those who head the Police Department. They wish to drive out these police heads and to keep driving them out because they





RICHARD ENRIGHT

*Commissioner of Police*

realize, and quite correctly, too, that constant changes in a police department are demoralizing to the force all along the line. It takes years of experience before a man can capably handle such a department. In the mean time, while an official is trying to straighten out a department, the vicious element is busily plying its trade quite unmolested.

In the administration preceding mine I know of one instance in which a prominent man connected with a morning newspaper was very friendly with one of the big gamblers. This operator was allowed to go along and his business was never interfered with by any officer of the Police Department. The evening edition of that newspaper likewise had another influential man who had great influence with the vice and gambling squad as it was then constituted. So it happened that when the little gamblers became too flourishing to suit the big operator, and so frisky as to hurt the big gambler, the vice and gambling squad would raid the little fellows, always exercising care to keep away from the big one. The big fellow's power never was challenged.

The present head of the Police Department closed up that big operator when he assumed his task at headquarters. What was the result? Why, the morning and evening editions of this newspaper immediately started the most vicious attack on the police head. They launched a tirade at him in order to drive him from office. The big gambler decided he was more at home in the real estate business under the circumstances surrounding his trade, but he appears to have found that line none too lucrative, and he wants to get back at his old trade. But he realizes that cannot be done so long as the present commissioner at headquarters stays where he is. Therefore, there is a determined demand for a change from the friends of the gambler, and some of the newspapers support the demand.

This is sufficient to show the reason for the attacks on the Commissioner of Accounts and the Police Commissioner. I shall stand by the heads of these and other departments to the bitter end, when the attacks are malicious and they are launched and backed by the corrupt elements and their friends.

It has often come to my ears that I am accused of having my speeches written for me by other persons. The fact of the matter is that not a speech nor even a letter is written for me except so far as concerns the physical labor. When I have a speech to make I invariably dictate it, practically in whole and certainly in

substance, to a stenographer. Then it is prepared for me by the stenographer for my use. Likewise, my letters are dictated personally, and very few, even among the more perfunctory ones, are left to other hands.

I never have aspired to be an orator. Because of the fact that speeches can be condensed and that there is no chance of being misquoted, I always have prepared speeches, since being mayor, that I have personally prepared, I have had some experience with misquotations, and can name some very finished orators who for the same reason invariably had recourse to prepared speeches.

It is quite customary for men on the bench to discuss their experiences, and they are generally interesting. As I look back upon my task as a judge I can unhesitatingly say that the most interesting phase of my judicial work was watching the young offender, the boy who has committed his first misstep. I discovered that fully 90 per cent. of first offenders were not inherently bad, and found that only 10 per cent. of those were intent on the wrong road.

How many people realize that the city boy is constantly under the eye of the police? In other words, he is far more subject to discipline, and perhaps hounding, than is the farmer's son. The result is, of course, that the city lad gets into more scrapes than does the country boy.

I know to-day a great many young men who were brought before me on the bench charged with a first offense. I have seen those boys settle down and get married and turn out good citizens. I do not believe in coddling the criminal by any means, but I know of no greater satisfaction than putting on the right path a young man who has only once transgressed. That is really a hobby with me.



MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

## CHAPTER V

### FIGHTING THE ENEMY

Since I became mayor there probably have been more investigations in our fair city than ever faced an executive in this country. So fast did they come that it was almost impossible to keep track of them or to remember their names.

On the other hand, politics has provided me with some pleasant memories. I can look back upon having shaken hands with such sterling characters as David B. Hill, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas C. Platt, James G. Blaine, Woodrow Wilson, William Jennings Bryan, William Howard Taft, etc. They were all great men or still are. I would decline to choose the leader from among them. Furthermore, in recent years I have met those world leaders Foch, Mercier, Joffre, Prince of Wales, King Albert, De Valera, Pershing, Diaz, and a host of similar notables. Every one of them impressed me as having the sincerity of purpose so essential for the people. All of them seemed to me to be intent with a desire to help humanity. Each, in his own sphere, was attempting to do the best that was in him.

What do I think of women in politics? Well, I will say they came in at just the psychological moment. The trusts and monopolies, the Standard Oil interests, the little group of international bankers, and more particularly the food trust, controlling the very necessities of life, had just about discouraged the men voters. Like an octopus with countless tentacles, this group had reached out into every direction so successfully that men with any individuality at all had lost hope. It was a discouraging outlook indeed. Even the political machines were being swamped.

Then fortunately came the women, independent and uncontrollable in politics, with a better perspective than men, and as a rule unbiased by family traditions or inherited impressions. They put into the political world a new impetus. They swung the tide against those seeking to control the country by what has been aptly termed the invisible government, which reaches into the inner congressional and legislative halls of every section. So I say I hail the arrival of women in politics. Their influence will grow as they grasp the fundamentals of the principles involved. They will see that their votes count.

Speaking of politics, there is nothing more interesting, and yet more despicable, than the efforts to "get" an official by what I term the "interests," or the "Slush Fund" contingent. Every expedient is used, every weapon resorted to. There are, of course, innumerable ways to corral a public official. It is not always plain bribery. I have found there are two very common methods popular with the "interests." One is to pamper, cajole, and compliment. The other is to break the official's health, his stamina, his morale, so that he is physically and mentally unfit to properly guard against mistakes.

First the "interests" try to have the candidates of every party friendly to them. They attempt to have all the say before the nominations are made. After the nominations are effected, irrespective of political strife, they support the one whom they consider the most supine. They play the game hard and sometimes with deadly accuracy. I have watched the play with more than usual care and I had to.

If by chance a man is elected whom the "interests" cannot handle, a man who is independent of them, then they start after him. First they resort to patting on the back and praising him. They offer to make him a social lion. They invite him to dinners. If he listens to their song, he begins to stay up late, gets little rest and sleep, and the next day he has a bad stomach. He has had rich food when he should have had a plain, substantial fare. The result is, he gets to work later than he should, is irritable and cross and in an ugly humor.

Neglect of work usually follows, and there is less watchfulness than is his wont. As a rule, that means mistakes and probably being involved in legal tangles. His enemies, ever watchful, then request that the official do something and he declines. Right there his grip is gone, because the "interests" know of his mistakes and they are frank in telling him they know.

Supposing the official dodges the lionizing trap, keeps his mind clear and his stomach right. That means he is in good fettle, is on his job, and ever watchful. The mayor to-day has under his direct or indirect control thirty-seven departments, and in addition he has the chairmanship of many committees. Social climbing or ambitions under such circumstances are out of the question. The mayor must keep his staff in good humor; he must depend on their loyalty, just as he must depend on friends and subordinates. He cannot set an example of ill temper. Otherwise he will not



get out of assistants the quality of work and support that is absolutely essential.

To follow strictly this policy an official faces attacks from the "interests" that are just as despicable as they are insistent. From every angle he faces abuse and vilification. Every channel of publicity is used that can be reached. Attempts are made to turn the people against the man they have put into office and to drive him from his place.

He is investigated, shadowed, and overshadowed. He is threatened and grand-jurized, mired and untermired. Scurrilous literature and missives are sent to his family, accusing him of all manner of indiscretions. Tradesmen, delivering their orders, are frequently used as letter-bearers. All this is done, and more, to break down the morale of the official, to break him physically and mentally. Some things which have been done to wreak vengeance even on the members of my family are almost beyond belief.

Mrs. Hylan has not been in the best of health for some time. This has been caused, beyond any doubt, by the scurrilous, underhand methods of enemies to create harm. Personally, I never have paid any attention to them. They do not bother me, but it is indeed a sad commentary on our political fabric when such scheming is possible. To attempt to strike at an official through his family, or the peace of mind of that family, is a favorite method, but it is one that never can be condoned.

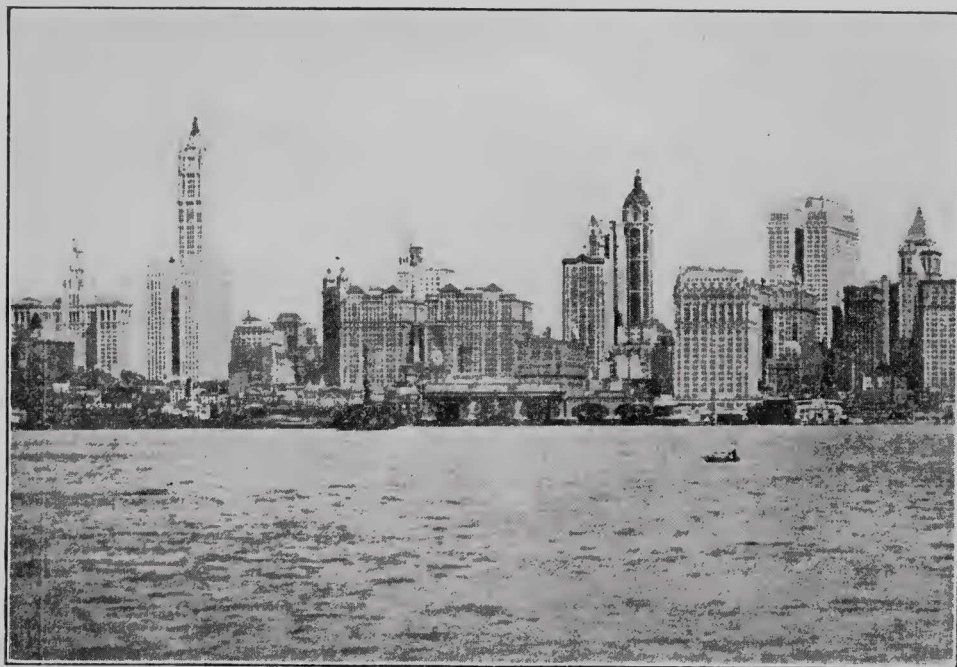
Of course, there are other methods used. Not long ago a scheme to interest me in a traction matter was used which embraced a very good friend of mine. It concerned the traction efforts in another city. I discovered, however, what was back of the scheme and also that my friend had been the innocent victim of the perpetrators.

Fortunately, I am in a position to weather these storms and attacks. When I go to bed, I am asleep in just about one minute. Mrs. Hylan, I am sorry to say, worries a little more of what she reads and hears, and I occasionally have to explain the ramifications of these attacks, the impelling motive back of them.

Sleep for me always has been the best of all preventives of trouble, physical and mental.

I know that the Golden Rule which my mother taught me has by experience brought as great happiness and comfort to me as to those toward whom it was manifested. The doctrine of mutual helpfulness and the knowledge that it is more blessed to give than





NEW YORK WATER FRONT

to receive are the real fundamentals of human happiness. They are the things which will lift us out of the pools of moral stagnation bred by the germs of greed and selfishness.

There is growing a keener appreciation that if there is one human attribute sadly needed to-day, and which we may all cultivate with profit to ourselves, to our neighbors, and to our country, it is the good, old-fashioned attribute of charity. It brings us out of a narrow, self-centered existence; it eases the path of those to whom fate has been unkind, and it weaves garlands that bind the children of the Father, regardless of race, color, or creed, into a helpful and gentle kinship.

A little more of this spirit of charity and a little less of the mad, ignoble scramble for wealth and power will do more to repair our injured social fabric than the most learned discourses on social justice or political economy.

In recognition of this I have each Christmastide availed myself of the opportunity to issue a proclamation calling the attention of the people to the Christmas holidays as a time to be active in deeds of charity, to speak the thoughtful word of good cheer and encouragement to our neighbor burdened with trials and tribulations, and to open our hearts to those whom poverty and distress have claimed for their own.

Personal contact has taught me that there are great numbers of homes where dark shadows have fallen and which only require a little touch of human interest and kindness to lift the deadening gloom. For the children of the poor, groping in the squalor of wretched poverty, I have appealed to the great heart of New York each Christmas time, never in vain, to bring the smiles back to the tired little faces, and have asked in His name that the same love be shown to these forgotten waifs of the poor which He ever has shown to the least of His children.

To my physique I owe a great deal. It sometimes has been said that I was showing some political preferment to my physician. That charge was bandied around during the attacks on me. How foolish is such a statement in the face of the fact that since I came to this city from the mountains I am certain I have not spent as much as \$20 with any doctor for my own health. Nature has endowed me with health and endurance, and it has been unnecessary for me to cater to the physician.

Hard work has been my medicine, and my mother's words have been my guide. Would that she were alive to-day to witness the potency of her wisdom.